

Exploring the Great Migration Through Population Change

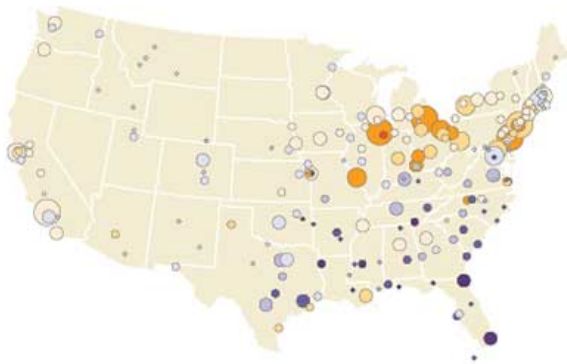
Description:

The Great Migration generally refers to the massive internal migration of Blacks from the South to urban centers in other parts of the country. Between 1910 and 1970, an estimated 6 million Blacks left the South. In this activity, students explore a graphic comparing an early wave of migration (1910-1940), sometimes referred to as the First Great Migration, with a later wave of migration (1940-1970) also known as the Second Great Migration.

Standard:

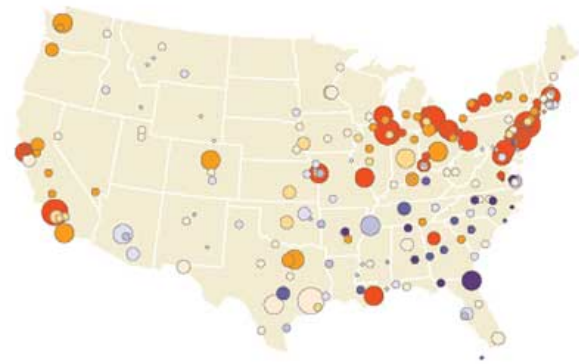
The Emergence of Modern America (1890-1930) Standard 3: How the United States changed from the end of World War I to the eve of the Great Depression

**The First Great Migration:
1910-1940**



The change in share of Blacks in cities is based on the percentage point difference in the percent of population that was Black in the later time period compared to the earlier. For example, 18.3 percent of the population in Gary, IN was Black in 1940 but was just 2.3 in 1910, which represented a 16.0 percentage-point change in the share of Blacks in the city. It was the largest change in share during the First Great Migration. By the end of the Second Great Migration, Newark, NJ had realized the largest increase in Black population share, with the Black proportion of the city rising from 10.6 in 1940 to 54.2 in 1970.

**The Second Great Migration:
1940-1970**



Change in share of Blacks

Increasing

- 10.0 or more
- 5.0 to 9.9
- 2.5 to 4.9
- 0.0 to 2.4
- 2.4 to -0.1
- 5.0 to -2.5
- 10.0 to -5.1

Decreasing

- Less than -10.0

**City population
(in later decade)**

- 1,000,000 or more
- 500,000 to 999,999
- 150,000 to 499,999
- 50,000 to 149,999
- Less than 50,000

Activity Instructions for Students

In the early 20th century, strict legislation limited immigration into the U.S. and brought about a shortage of labor in many industrial and manufacturing centers in the northeast and midwest. These cities became common destinations for Black migrants from the South. Cities that experienced substantial changes in racial composition between 1910 and 1940 include Chicago, Detroit, New York City, and Philadelphia.

During and after WWII, Black migrants flooded into many of the cities that were destinations before the war, following friends and relatives that had made the journey earlier. Poor economic conditions in the Jim Crow South spurred a larger migration flow than was the case in the 1910-to-1940 period and resulted in the creation of large Black population centers in many cities across the Northeast, Midwest, and West.

The Great Migration generally refers to the massive internal migration of Blacks from the South to urban centers in other parts of the country. Between 1910 and 1970, an estimated 6 million Blacks left the South.

In this activity, you will examine a graphic which compares an early wave of migration (1910 – 1940), sometimes referred to as the **First Great Migration**, with a later wave of migration (1940 – 1970) also known as the **Second Great Migration**.

Read through and examine “The Great Migration, 1910 to 1970” graphic and then respond to the questions below.

Activity Assessment

1. Using the introduction to this activity and the graphic, give a brief (2-3 sentences) description of the information this graphic illustrates.

This graphic depicts two waves of internal migration – the First Great Migration (1910 – 1940) and the Second Great Migration (1940 – 1970). The graphic illustrates the change in the percentage of the Black population in cities over the specified period.

2. What do the circles themselves on the graphic represent? What does the size of the circle represent? What do warm-colored circles (yellow and orange) represent? What do cool-colored circles (violet and purple) represent?

The circles on the graphic represent cities and the size of the circle corresponds to the population of that city in the later decade represented. Larger circles indicate larger city populations while smaller circles represent smaller city populations. Warm-colored circles (yellow and orange) represent population growth and correspond to the percentage point gain in the Black population in the later time period compared to the earlier. Cool-colored circles (violet and purple) represent population decline and correspond to the percentage point loss in the Black population in the later time period compared to the earlier.

3. For each of the following descriptions, specify whether the symbol represents (1) a smaller or larger city (2) a gain or loss in the Black population percentage and (3) whether that population change was relatively larger or smaller.

- a. A small light yellow circle.
- b. A large dark purple circle.
- c. A large orange circle.
- d. A small light purple circle.

- a. *A smaller city, gain in the Black population percentage, smaller population change*
- b. *A larger city, loss in the Black population percentage, larger population change*
- c. *A larger city, gain in the Black population percentage, larger population change*
- d. *A smaller city, loss in the Black population percentage, smaller population change*

4. Focus on the First Great Migration part of the graphic. Which area of the country had the largest loss in Black population percentage between 1910 and 1940? How do you know? Which area of the country had the largest gain in Black population percentage over the same period? How do you know?

During the First Great Migration, the southern part of the country had the largest loss in Black population percentage. This loss is represented by multiple medium and small cool-colored circles, which represent Black population percentage loss. The northern part of the country had the largest gain in Black population percentage. This gain is represented by multiple small, medium, and large warm-colored circles, which represent Black population percentage gain.

5. What were some of the factors that affected Black migrants’ decisions to move during this period? What role did World War I play in the First Great Migration?

- *Black migrants would have decided to move to a different part of the country for a variety of individual reasons and circumstances, but some of the recurring themes are:*
- *Economic opportunities in many industrial and manufacturing centers in the northeast and midwest*
- *Jim Crow practices of discrimination and harassment in the South*
- *The desire to follow friends and relatives that had made the journey earlier*
- *World War I brought about a shortage of labor in many industrial and manufacturing centers in the northeast and midwest. Many men who would have normally worked in the factories were off serving in the military. These cities became common destinations for Black migrants from the south who moved looking for jobs and economic opportunities in cities such as Chicago, Detroit, New York City, and Philadelphia.*

6. Now compare the graphic for the First Great Migration to the Second Great Migration. What similarities and what differences do you notice with regard to patterns of migration during these two periods?

Migration seems to be less uniform during the Second Great Migration than during the First Great Migration. During the First Great Migration, the majority of cities with Black population percentage losses were in the South and West while the majority of cities with Black population percentage gains were in the North and Midwest. However, in the south during the Second Great Migration, while there are continued losses in Black population percentage, there are also several cities with Black population gains. Furthermore, there are several cities along the west coast and in California which have large Black population percentage gains during the Second Great Migration. Finally, it appears that during the Second Great Migration, the percentage point gains of Black population in the northeast and midwest were larger than during the First Great Migration, as indicated by a greater number of dark orange circles (percentage point increase of 10.0 or more).

Teacher's Notes

Learning Objectives

- Students will be able to read and interpret a graphic depicting Black population percentage change in cities during the First and Second Great Migrations.
- Students will be able to correlate symbols mapped on the graphic to gains and losses of Black population percentage change.
- Students will be able to use data from a graphic to draw conclusions about patterns of Black migration during the First and Second Great Migrations and relate those patterns to the larger issues of the period.

Blooms Taxonomy

Creating

Instructions for Teachers

Before this Activity

Review with students the events leading up to and surrounding the First and Second Great Migrations, the Jim Crow South, WWI and WWII.

Review the graphic with students, ensuring that they understand the meanings conveyed in the size and color of the mapped symbols.

During this Activity

Have students respond to questions the “Activity Assessment.” Students’ responses can be a group activity, class discussion, or individual, written assignment.

After this Activity

Review students’ responses to the “Activity Assessment” prompts, addressing any misconceptions or mistakes as you review.

Lead students in a discussion of patterns in First and Second Great Migrations as well as the similarities and differences of the two. Discuss with students the larger social, economic, and cultural implications of these events.